

WARHAMMER
40,000

THE MEMORY OF FLESH

MATTHEW FARRER

AN IRON HANDS SHORT STORY

Table of Contents

[Cover](#)

[The Memory of Flesh - Matthew Farrer](#)

[About The Author](#)

[Legal](#)

[eBook license](#)

THE MEMORY OF FLESH

Matthew Farrer

Three eyes, one green glass in brass, one clear crystal in bright steel. The third, crystal also, wide and bulbous, set high up on the brow in a gunmetal-dark mount. They glittered in the pitiless blue light, bright against the black radiation hood.

The eyes turned. Left, right, up, down. Nothing triggered the alert routines. They adjusted focus, field depth, and spectrum sensitivity. Nothing on infrared but for a little heat from the idling engine behind. Ultraviolet was a uniform glare of such intensity as to be almost useless. A moment's adjustment damped it out.

Left, right. The beautiful indigo sweep of the desert, stippled with micrometeorite impacts etched in shadows as inky-black as the sky overhead.

Up, to glance at the distant rock ridges. Auspex had put the ridge lines at thirty-eight kilometres away. The Rhino's ranging lasers had confirmed thirty-eight-point-one-seven.

Left, and moving, tramping across the surface on sturdy metal-sheathed legs. No sound. No air to carry any.

Fifteen degrees around the perimeter, past the train of three ammunition wagons coupled to the rear of the Rhino. They had their own optical feeds, but cruder, best backed up by direct checks.

Left, right, up, down. Silence, emptiness, nothing but purple dust drenched in the murderous radiation of its star.

The sentry moved on. Traverse another fifteen degrees. And halt, listening.

A code-bark had hit the Rhino's high-gain antenna and bounced to the servitor's own short-range receptors. A move order under the veteran-sergeant's transmission seal, a set of coordinates, an adjustment to alertness settings. The Rhino's hatch came down, kicking up puffs of dust that made tiny, perfect arcs in the vacuum.

Sixty-seven seconds later, with the hatch closed, the servitor anchored into the control hub and its three eyes now channelling the external optical feeds, the

Rhino moved silently away across the desert, bound for the ridge line.

The breg-shei were fast, but break their back with a bolt shell and they died just like anything else. Veteran-Sergeant Dolmech had eighteen confirmed kills on the xenos since planetfall on Regnan Drey. Up that to thirty-two since they had begun the pursuit through Regnan Magna's rings and moons. Up that to a hundred and forty-eight since initial engagement with the ugly little hulk from which the creatures had been terrorising Imperial colonists on Regnan Impri.

Every one of those kills had been at close quarters. Dolmech didn't trust a breg-shei to stay dead until he had personally put his boot through its thorax.

Even then, this one put up a fight. Its club-like forelegs flickered with that incredible speed they had, and bounced off his chest plate. The blind fist of a head – they still weren't sure where the sensory organs were, or how they worked – bobbed in its little socket. The sacs that held its viscera distended and shifted its gut back and forth inside its shell.

Dolmech leaned forward and twisted his ceramite boot sharply around and back, in a motion he had perfected aboard the xenos hulk. He felt the alien's spinal ridges crumple and snap, and its limbs went limp.

Nineteen confirmed kills since planetfall.

Dolmech's helmet display bracketed and tagged a cluster of movements: another alien coming at him over the ridge crest. Even before the image had properly autofocused and resolved, his bolt pistol was kicking. He aimed low – the slender bodies were hard to hit, but ground shots would either cripple the creature's feet or blast the terrain beneath it and ruin its balance and speed.

Impact, explosion. The breg-shei staggered for a moment and Dolmech was already surging forward, jump pack flaring.

Two bolt shells streaked past underneath him, the timing split-second perfect. Brother Thulko's shots clipped the creature's shoulder and thorax, and a second later Dolmech crashed into it, power axe ripping through the up-jutting leg joint, his armoured shoulder ramming its body. The force wrenched the breg-shei up onto its rear legs and it scabbled to avoid landing on its back. Their firearms, crushed between their armoured chests, fired together, but the alien's synaptic lash barely had time to flare up before Dolmech's bolt shattered the bulbous projector-cell. A second point-blank shot opened up its thorax, and Dolmech jammed the muzzle into the wound and fired again. The upper carapace juddered and deformed as the shell exploded inside, and the creature died.

Twenty confirmed kills.

Dolmech remained kneeling in the tangle of stiffening limbs, head down so Thulko had a clear field of fire on any new contacts. He felt rather than heard the

metallic snaps as the autoloader extended from his mechanical forearm and switched a full magazine into his pistol.

‘Clear,’ Thulko’s voice said in his ear, with the odd watery quality that the radioactive sunlight was lending their vox traffic. Dolmech stayed down a moment longer, filling the almost-spent magazine in his autoloader. The last shell in place, the loader slid back into the metal frame of his forearm. Both Dolmech’s arms were mechanical from the bicep down, a dark grey iron-titanium alloy he had forged himself.

He stood.

‘I’ve ordered Jothael-004 to move its supply point from deep reserve to this point in the line,’ he voxed back. A kick parted the dead breg-shei’s limbs and he stepped off the corpse. ‘Update your tactical maps accordingly and designate this as our new anchor disposition. Affirm.’

‘Affirm,’ came Thulko’s reply. A moment later the rest of his squad, strung out along the hills, chimed in with him.

‘Affirm,’ from Ergai, who was escorting two servitor-driven Rapier platforms out to the ridge-crest where they could pelt heavy las-fire onto any more breg-shei that tried escaping across the radiation-drenched desert beyond.

‘Affirm,’ from Orzereg, who had taken a meltagun and gone forward to join Gymark in flushing out a pocket of breg-shei who had encysted themselves in the rock crevices and killed the servitors Dolmech had first sent to root them out. Gymark’s affirmation came in a moment later. One by one, the squad signed in and the runes in Dolmech’s positional display turned green.

The final affirmation was a quick crackle of non-verbal code from Veteran Jozeck, who was commanding the squad’s Razorback carrier and guarding a notch between the hills eight kilometres to the south. He had taken a hit from a synaptic lash and his fine control was taking time to return. Just after the hit, his speech over the vox had been a stream of strange sounds, obscenities and odd stream of consciousness sentences; he had switched to using code pulses until he trusted himself to vocalise normally.

To stand out on this open desert in sunlight that would have killed an unshielded human in minutes was a pleasing tribute to the strength of the Iron Hands’ armour, augmetics and wills. Jozeck’s infirmity was a humiliating reminder of the weakness of their remaining flesh.

The breg-shei who had shot him had been smashed to fragments by a furious extended barrage from the Razorback’s heavy bolters as Jozeck avenged the insult. Dolmech approved.

His vox gave an alert click and Thulko’s rune flashed in his visor. He turned to his squadmate.

‘Speak.’

‘Querying for next course of action, brother-sergeant, given your order in context of tactical auguries from the *Ironshod*.’

Dolmech made no reply over the vox, but plodded back through the purple dust to stand directly by Thulko, looking past the other Space Marine’s shoulder. He extended his hand, after a moment another click told him that the other had done likewise, and established a closed-vox connection between their armour systems. Each watching the landscape behind the other’s back, they conversed.

‘Speak,’ said Dolmech again.

‘The transmissions from *Ironshod* indicate possible movement signatures on the right flank of this position. I raised the query wanting to know whether you would require me to double back and block that route against any enemy trying to slip through our line.’

‘That was the context. Go on.’

‘A breg-shei ambush on our supply cache as it moves up to join us may reduce our available materiel stock and impede our push across the next open desert. The servitor is not Adeptus Astartes. It is not strong.’

‘The servitor is my own workmanship, Thulko. I know its capabilities exactly.’

‘In which case...’ There was a pause while the other Space Marine digested Dolmech’s words. ‘I have stated my piece, then. I respect you too much to cast aspersion on your works, brother-sergeant. The servitor will repel any ambush it encounters.’

‘I doubt it. Inload its trajectory data from my armour, please.’

There was another short pause.

‘Brother-sergeant, I...’

‘Uncertainty is weakness, Thulko. Expunge it.’

‘Yes, brother-sergeant.’

‘You are correct. The servitor is built to fight, but it is not an Iron Hand. It will not be the equal of the pack of breg-shei that I suspect are breaching our line.’

‘Have we positional data?’ Thulko queried.

‘Not yet. Radiation is interfering with *Ironshod*’s auguries. It is getting harder to pinpoint small enemy concentrations with precision. Optimal approach is to provide a fixed and known point to converge on, at which we can intercept them. I gave them our supply cache.’

‘You announced it over the vox...’

‘Because more and more evidence from the Librarium indicates that breg-shei senses extend to a spectrum that includes battlefield vox. Twelve recorded incidents indicating enemy ability to intercept and understand our transmissions,

nine more speculative.'

Thulko nodded. 'And so the physical line. I have learned, and grown stronger, brother-sergeant.'

'All I ask,' Dolmech replied. 'That, and to hold this position until further contact from me. I have the ambush of an ambush to prepare.'

Twenty-two eyes, steady and unblinking, watching the desert pass by.

Cortical augmetics allowed the servitor to monitor all the Rhino's pict feeds at once, a three hundred and sixty degree moving panorama its old human senses would never have been able to manage. The route Dolmech had ordered showed as a yellow overlay, numbers over the waypoints blurring downward as the ridge line came closer.

Its optics did not isolate and tag movements the way Adeptus Astartes battle visors did, and it took the servitor several seconds to focus on the thing cantering across the desert sand eight hundred metres away. A gleaming, multi-limbed body, throwing back the purple and blue light around it and giving glints of other colours with every fluid step, like an oil slick moving in three dimensions.

The bolters on the Rhino's frontal cupolas traversed and found range, the arming sequence triggering an automatic code-bark alert on the general band. Threat parameters ticked into crimson. The spite-switch in the towing couplings armed automatically, ready to detonate the wagons to avoid capture. Target reticules, heat status and ammo counts flashed into the servitor's vision as gunnery catechisms unspooled across its brain.

The first shot from the right-hand bolter went short, skating along the desert floor and exploding silently in the dust, kicking up a cloud that fell behind and vanished in seconds. The second shot passed in under the breg-shei's high-prancing legs without connecting.

And then the Rhino's side was covered in crawling green-white light as the creature returned fire.

The servitor was not frightened by the hit. It was not perturbed by the spurts and arcs of energy that began coalescing on the inside of the Rhino. It simply filtered the optic feed to compensate for the haze of lash-light, and was ranging another shot when two more blasts struck the Rhino from dead ahead.

Two breg-shei reared up from their cyst-nests under the coarse, purple regolith. For a moment they were frozen in the forward-facing pict displays, and then they had broken out to each side, saturating the oncoming Rhino with energy.

Another shell flew at the flanking alien, which was fast enough to flatten its body to the ground and let the shot spear past. The left-hand bolter sputtered out

an erratic three-shot salvo that passed between the new attackers and cratered the desert floor. A moment later the carrier juddered slightly as the tracks received conflicting messages to change their speed.

Sensing they had hurt their prey, the breg-shei leapt forward. One daintily twitched its body along the ground, whipping green streamers of energy ahead of it. Its partner went high, leaping straight up, keeping a fat beam of power from its lash trained on the centre of the Rhino's front plate. It hung for a moment before the weak gravity started to pull it back down, its careful focus of the lash never faltering.

That was how Brother Dolmech met it – high above the desert, riding his jump pack in behind it and cleaving it with savage axe-strokes almost too fast to see.

He half-somersaulted and pulsed the pack again, alien blood spattering and freezing around him as he knocked the halves of his enemy away. Some reflexive jerk of its manipulator claws had triggered its lash one final time and for a moment thready worms of light danced down the side of Dolmech's armour. His right foot went numb, and his breathing hitched as his multi-lung spasmed. His thoughts dissolved into roars and crackles, odd half-words and dream-images bursting and vanishing, until control returned to him with a crash like a fortress gate.

The hit had been the barest brush. A more direct one would have left him brain-burned. Breg-shei lashes were the scourge of organics.

Organics. Dolmech's thoughts were his own again, and they were all dark, bilious fury. His armour, his beautiful augmetics, had shrugged off the attack. His flesh was not stern enough to imitate them. *Weakness.* The sensation was revolting.

Dolmech punched down out of the black sky with hatred driving his striking arm. The other breg-shei saw his shadow and danced under his axe-stroke, but it had no answer to his full armoured mass slamming into it. Dolmech drove the thing into the desert floor like a rivet into a bulkhead, raising a great cloud of regolith around them that suddenly flared white as the breg-shei discharged its lash into the ground beneath it.

A yellow flare punctured the glow, the flash of Dolmech's pistol, the round caroming off the curving head-ridge. Dolmech released his pistol, gripped the hard crest behind the head socket and dragged the enemy bodily upward. Its forelegs whipped around and crashed into his armour hard enough to light amber warning runes in his visor, but Dolmech had his footing and leverage now. A cough from his jump pack lifted him a bare half-metre from the ground, the breg-shei held in front of him.

A moment later the speeding Rhino slammed into them both.

For a heartbeat the xenos seemed stunned by the impact and Dolmech took his chance. They were too close for the long-hafted axe so he whirled it up over his shoulder, letting the mag-lock on his pack catch it, and brought his arm back down in a sledgehammer blow that drove the breg-shei against the Rhino's front. There was a stunning flare beneath them as its lash went off, but Dolmech felt no hit. He locked one augmetic hand around the Rhino's hatch lintel, and began using his other to batter the thing to death. After four hits, its back armour was broken. After six, the counter-blows of its forelegs had grown weak and desperate. Dolmech shot his hand out to where his bolt pistol swung on the lanyard chain anchored to his wrist. He crooked his arm around the breg-shei as though he were attempting to throttle it with his forearm, worked the gun muzzle into place and shot its head off.

Pulling himself up and away, he let the body slide down the front of the tank, to fall and be ground under by its treads and those of the ammo wagons behind it.

It was not a triumphant moment. There was still another one out there. Another one of the creatures who had shot him and made him feel *weak*. Dolmech's mouth was still twisted in anger as he triggered his pack and arced silently into the sky again.

The servitor designated Jothael-004 kept the Rhino on an arrow-straight course, churning forward to the ridge line at the point of its indigo dust plume. It had flashed an all clear in response to its master's curt interrogatory code, but if Dolmech had been aboard the carrier to examine his thrall more closely he would have been furious...

The Rhino was moving on its own, rolling forward on locked controls. Data traffic between the servitor and control hub was jagged, barely coherent. The armoured bolter mountings hid feverish mechanical activity as the sub-systems received odd order sequences: *reload, switch magazine feeds, jam check, jam check, reload, unload, switch feeds*. Sensors were being shut off, reactivated, amplified and tuned down almost at random. In the pilot's socket, the servitor's body jerked periodically like someone succumbing to sleep and then jolting out of it. Diagnostics should have been running on the Rhino's systems, ensuring the attack had not disrupted anything the Iron Hands would need, especially any systems they might couple their own armour interfaces with. But those systems were ignored.

The diagnostics ran repeatedly, obsessively, on the servitor's own cerebral systems, combing both its flesh and metal brains like someone ransacking a

room over and over again for something they could not find.

A terse message came in on the general vox – somewhere out across the desert Dolmech had chased down and killed the third breg-shei. Orders still applied: Jothael-004 was to move up to the base of the ridge line. Dolmech was designating the area provisionally secure.

At that, there should have been changes. Jothael-004 should have revised its threat condition downward, changed the configuration of its sensor sweeps and confirmed its position.

The servitor did none of those things. It let the Rhino carry it on, twitching at the controls, the interface writhing, and the threat overlay on its vision remained bright throbbing crimson.

The final breg-shei's lash had thrown out constant, strobing charges as they had brawled in the dust and Dolmech had not been able to avoid every flash. His head still rang from it, and at first he took the signal for one of the maddening sense-echoes left by the xenos weaponry.

'...ALIVE? ...WHY... why am... BLESS—'

To his own disgust Dolmech wasted several moments trying to identify the voice before he realised it had no organic origin. It was the voice of Jothael-004, synthesised directly into the vox-band. All his servitors sounded alike. Some Iron Hands programmed recognisable variations into their vox-coders, but Dolmech had always dismissed that as frippery. A properly-coded servitor would identify itself with every transmission.

Jothael-004 had not. Jothael-004 was malfunctioning.

'...coming with... WITH... unsustainable... with me... EYE YOUR...'

Dolmech wheeled around, purple grit swirling up around his ankles, and strode to the battered corpse of the breg-shei he had hunted down. He seized a protruding leg in both metal hands and, snarling with the strain on his organics, broke it off. He flung the fragment away and stamped on the corpse. He grabbed his power axe from its clamp at his shoulder and opened yet more gaping wounds in its shell.

'...have... ASSET... Fallen Asset...'

Brutalising the dead thing did not vent his rage, but after a few moments it took away some of its edge. Dolmech's helmet logs showed Jothael-004 reporting all clear as it drove away, but it was definitely the source for this babble. Everyone would have heard the transmissions. He was disgraced in front of his squad. His workmanship was flawed. His workmanship was weak.

In his early days with the Iron Hands, Dolmech had worked hard to clear his psyche of the endless emotional buzzing that he dimly remembered from the

days before the Chapter had taken him. But as he had grown older, risen to command a squad, expunged more of the frail old flesh from his body, Dolmech had decided there was a place for emotions. There was a place for disgust, and hate, and contempt. Those emotions he had learned to use as weapon and fuel. He had used them to burn weakness out of him even as the surgical lasers burned the flesh away from his body to replace it with bright, pure metal. Disgust led to strength of will. Self-hatred led to cleanliness.

He had personally carried out the construction of the servitor echelon that supported his squad in battle. Responsibility for this one's weakness fell squarely on him. Dolmech looked down at the breg-shei corpse again and felt nothing but weary loathing. Enough of this. He would have to board the Rhino and correct Jothael-004's aberrant conduct directly.

A pulse from his jump pack punched Dolmech up into the empty sky. He kicked his feet out and fired another pulse that set him on a long ballistic arc back toward the ridge.

'...BLESSING IRON why why IRON alive BLESSING...'

The servitor wasn't even of true Iron Hands make, Dolmech realised. It had not come from the culturing vats and tissue printeries in the clan-company's apothecarion. It was ex-human, one of the unmodified flesh-stock that made up the grubbing masses of the Imperium, the raw material for servitors and Chapter thralls.

The raw material for Iron Hands Space Marines, too, but Dolmech did not like to think of that.

'...OVERRIDE CODE KILL ME override code YOUR eye YOUR EYE YOUR EYE YOUR...'

It was *that* one. Dolmech remembered it. The one from the penal manufactorum Cog. That strange business with the rebellion, and the Dark Angels. It had told him something about his eye, and had been afraid of the Blessing. That fear, at least, had left it when it had surrendered the better part of its flesh and its mind to the reforging.

'Jothael-004,' he voxed. 'Sergeant Dolmech instructing. Quarter your current speed and stand by for rendezvous. Await my hail.'

There would be repercussions. Their advance would snag on this. An unconscionable delay, perhaps whole minutes, while he set right the instrument he had made. Speeding after the Rhino in great flaring bursts from his pack, Dolmech bent his considerable will to keeping his thoughts on the task at hand, but he could not help wondering what his punishment from the Chapter would be.

The external vox-grille set above the servitor's sternum vibrated, but the Rhino was not pressurised and there was nothing to carry the sound. If there had been, it would have been the one word, over and over. *Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech.*

One by one the optical feeds went blank, replaced with green-black darkness and scrolling columns of letters. *Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech.*

This was a name with meaning. The servitor had not enough mind left to understand what, but still the faintest tracteries of long-scrubbed neural paths, inflamed back to half-life by the breg-shei lash, were ringing and clamouring as that name passed through them.

Dolmech.

Cutting. Ripping. Unutterable, obliterating pain. The stink of blood and hot machine oil. The towering figure in power armour watching impassively as a voice shrieked for mercy. A voice that the servitor did not remember as the one it used to own.

It had no ability to understand the images that the lash-flare had dragged out of its lacerated mind. It had no consciousness to understand what had happened to it. But it went to work on the memories nevertheless, pushing this strange new data through the directives that still sputtered in its forebrain.

It tried the processes in its basic motor and vox routines, then its order and code-phrase banks. When the diagnostic routines tried they stalled: the trauma of the Blessing of Iron had been absolute, but the cold analytics of the diagnostic assessors did not know how to deal with these sense-swamping memories so at odds with the all-clear the physical sensors were reporting.

Its thoughts started to whip about more quickly. Its self-repair processes screamed for priority, for its severed limbs and violated body, insisting that there was damage, massive damage.

That process spun out a connection to another directive framework: the still-active combat protocols.

Now the servitor found a process that could resolve this flood of mental noise.

It registered that it had suffered terrible injury. Not recently, according to diagnostics, but the memories were too vivid to dispute. Massive damage, forced physical trauma. Overriding of attempts to resist or escape.

The words 'Blessing of Iron' ricocheted through the servitor's head without triggering any associations.

The shape. The great shape that had watched. That had caused the trauma. The core of the threat. *Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech. Dolmech.*

That name had no other meaning in the servitor's mind. The programming that had locked Dolmech in as its owner and controller had been left in ruin by the

alien lash. Now it was processing that name and that image with the mental machinery it used for battle.

The servitor tagged the name and image of *Dolmech* with a vermilion threat rune, matched it to auspex scans and recent vox footage.

The optic feeds flared back into life. In the control position, the servitor that had once been Beneficiari Armicus was still again, and ready.

Dolmech caught the code-bark from the Rhino a moment after he finally spotted the carrier dragging its wagons up the first ridge. His anger was thrumming as hot as the hard blue sun overhead. The servitor had disobeyed him. It had fled him, sped past its destination point. And now this code-bark, signifying auspex contact with an incoming threat.

The ridge was clear of breg-shei. Dolmech knew that. He snarled at the humiliation the damned thrall was causing him and triggered a hard jump pack burn that sent him bulleting forward.

The Rhino was clambering into the increasingly broken terrain of the ridge, as if its driver had simply not bothered to stop or steer it. The ammo wagons bounced behind it, leaning this way and that. It was only a matter of time before one of them twisted its coupling too hard and snapped free. Dolmech debated landing on each one and decoupling it before he dealt with the servitor, then dismissed the idea. The whole rig needed to be stopped now.

‘Dolmech,’ he voxed. ‘Dolmech commanding. Decommission yourself instantly, preparatory to dismounting and mind-scrub. Confirm and obey. *Confirm and obey.*’

Another code-bark, confirming the threat signal. The servitor was demented. Something had got at—

A bolter round cracked into Dolmech’s chest, killing his forward momentum and setting warning runes dancing across his helmet display. He dropped to an ungainly landing on the top of the second ammo truck, trying to make sense of it. Another shell exploded just below his gorget. Had the truck not jounced and tilted him it would have hit the helmet seal square on. His attacker was using targeting doctrine identical to what he had programmed into—

Dolmech realised what was happening. No snarl, but a roar as he unlimbered his axe and blasted forward again, nothing in his thoughts but to hack his way into the Rhino and tear his misbegotten creation apart with his own metal hands.

The servitor’s broken mind had not been able to quite make sense of the decommission command, except in the general sense that here was another attempt by the threat designated *Dolmech* to try and end its existence. Counter-

fire to the incoming assault had performed as per doctrine, but as the sergeant crashed against the back of the Rhino and damage warnings began streaming out of the feeds, the methodical combat logic started to grow ragged.

'I thought...' it remembers without understanding. *'I thought you were going to kill me.'*

Kill. Me. Kill.

The pain. The 'Blessing'. The Dolmech-threat took it and made it a prisoner and did... things...

The servitor's damage reports screamed red at the fresh flood of memories, as the Rhino's rear hatch split and parted under Dolmech's assault.

The last scraps of coherent orders in the servitor's mind were washed away, weakened by the breg-shei lash and destroyed by the relived agony of the Blessing of Iron. For the first time since it had had its humanity ripped from it, it felt fear again.

Blindly, the Rhino's bolters spun and fired, trying to angle in to hit the Space Marine battering his way into his own transport. The vox was all screams, beast screams, the servitor giving voice to pain and fear that had been walled off a lifetime ago.

At the moment that Dolmech finally tore the hatch off its mounting, his servitor's raw panic triggered the spite-switch.

The first wagon's detonation lit up the ridge line brighter than a breg-shei lash. The second and third joined to make a bright ball of light that, for a moment, shouted defiance back at the giant star overhead.

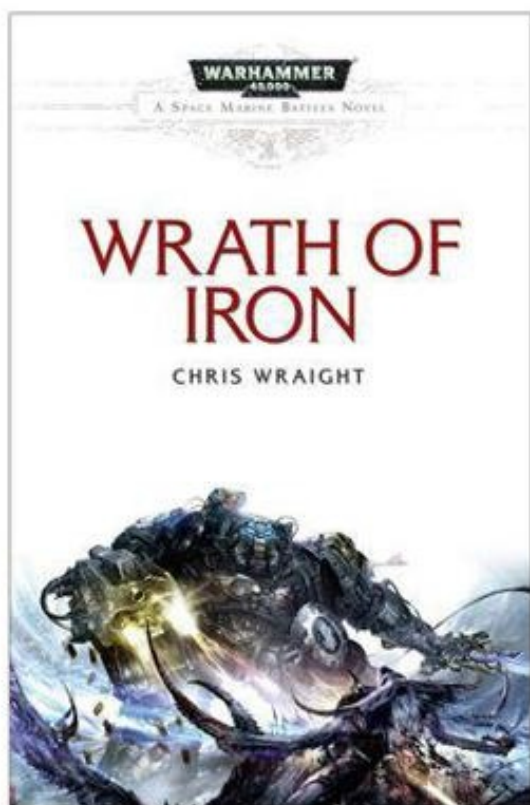
The Rhino – along with Jothael-004 – was obliterated in an instant.

Veteran-Sergeant Dolmech was catapulted away from the wreck, turning head-over-heels again and again, finally crashing soundlessly to the desert floor beyond the ridge line. He skidded in the dust, rolling and tumbling, coming to rest on his mangled jump pack, helmet knocked from its damaged seal by the great blast.

Open to the harsh sunlight, his exposed face bore one dead flesh-eye and one cold blue augmetic of exquisite workmanship. Both stared lifelessly up into the hard black sky.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

MATTHEW FARRER lives in Australia, and is a member of the Canberra Speculative Fiction Guild. He has been writing since his teens, and has a number of novels and short stories to his name, including the popular Shira Calpurnia novels for the Black Library.



As foul daemonic hordes begin to swarm into the sub-sector, the Space Marines of the Iron Hands Chapter bring furious retribution to the Slaanesh-worshipping citizens of Contqual.

Download now from blacklibrary.com



READ IT FIRST

EXCLUSIVE PRODUCTS | EARLY RELEASES | FREE DELIVERY

blacklibrary.com

A BLACK LIBRARY PUBLICATION

Originally published in the Black Library Games Day Anthology 2012. This version published in 2013 by Black Library, Games Workshop Ltd., Willow Road, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, UK

© Games Workshop Limited 2012, 2013. All rights reserved.

Black Library, the Black Library logo, The Horus Heresy, The Horus Heresy logo, The Horus Heresy eye device, Space Marine Battles, the Space Marine Battles logo, Warhammer 40,000, the Warhammer 40,000 logo, Games Workshop, the Games Workshop logo and all associated brands, names, characters, illustrations and images from the Warhammer 40,000 universe are either ®, ™ and/or © Games Workshop Ltd 2000-2013, variably registered in the UK and other countries around the world. All rights reserved.

A CIP record for this book is available from the British Library.

ISBN 978-1-78251-001-7

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise except as expressly permitted under license from the publisher.

This is a work of fiction. All the characters and events portrayed in this book are fictional, and any resemblance to real people or incidents is purely coincidental.

See the Black Library on the internet at

blacklibrary.com

Find out more about Games Workshop's world of Warhammer and the Warhammer 40,000 universe at

www.games-workshop.com

eBook license

This license is made between:

Games Workshop Limited t/a Black Library, Willow Road, Lenton, Nottingham, NG7 2WS, United Kingdom (“Black Library”); and

(2) the purchaser of an e-book product from Black Library website (“You/you/Your/your”)

(jointly, “the parties”)

These are the terms and conditions that apply when you purchase an e-book (“e-book”) from Black Library. The parties agree that in consideration of the fee paid by you, Black Library grants you a license to use the e-book on the following terms:

* 1. Black Library grants to you a personal, non-exclusive, non-transferable, royalty-free license to use the e-book in the following ways:

o 1.1 to store the e-book on any number of electronic devices and/or storage media (including, by way of example only, personal computers, e-book readers, mobile phones, portable hard drives, USB flash drives, CDs or DVDs) which are personally owned by you;

o 1.2 to access the e-book using an appropriate electronic device and/or through any appropriate storage media; and

* 2. For the avoidance of doubt, you are ONLY licensed to use the e-book as described in paragraph 1 above. You may NOT use or store the e-book in any other way. If you do, Black Library shall be entitled to terminate this license.

* 3. Further to the general restriction at paragraph 2, Black Library shall be entitled to terminate this license in the event that you use or store the e-book (or any part of it) in any way not expressly licensed. This includes (but is by no means limited to) the following circumstances:

o 3.1 you provide the e-book to any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.2 you make the e-book available on bit-torrent sites, or are otherwise complicit in ‘seeding’ or sharing the e-book with any company, individual

or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.3 you print and distribute hard copies of the e-book to any company, individual or other legal person who does not possess a license to use or store it;

o 3.4 You attempt to reverse engineer, bypass, alter, amend, remove or otherwise make any change to any copy protection technology which may be applied to the e-book.

* 4. By purchasing an e-book, you agree for the purposes of the Consumer Protection (Distance Selling) Regulations 2000 that Black Library may commence the service (of provision of the e-book to you) prior to your ordinary cancellation period coming to an end, and that by purchasing an e-book, your cancellation rights shall end immediately upon receipt of the e-book.

* 5. You acknowledge that all copyright, trademark and other intellectual property rights in the e-book are, shall remain, the sole property of Black Library.

* 6. On termination of this license, howsoever effected, you shall immediately and permanently delete all copies of the e-book from your computers and storage media, and shall destroy all hard copies of the e-book which you have derived from the e-book.

* 7. Black Library shall be entitled to amend these terms and conditions from time to time by written notice to you.

* 8. These terms and conditions shall be governed by English law, and shall be subject only to the jurisdiction of the Courts in England and Wales.

* 9. If any part of this license is illegal, or becomes illegal as a result of any change in the law, then that part shall be deleted, and replaced with wording that is as close to the original meaning as possible without being illegal.

* 10. Any failure by Black Library to exercise its rights under this license for whatever reason shall not be in any way deemed to be a waiver of its rights, and in particular, Black Library reserves the right at all times to terminate this license in the event that you breach clause 2 or clause 3.